

The new Peace-Building Commission was created, which we need for diffusing long-lasting conflicts. Too often in the past, the U.N. has been unable to prevent genocide and lasting bloodshed: in the Congo, in Rwanda, in the former Yugoslavia, and now in the Darfur region of Sudan.

One of the U.N.'s fundamental roles lies in the defense of human rights. The newly created Human Rights Council must become more credible and more effective than the commission that preceded it. Its best way to gain credibility would be by starting with a thorough and unbiased evaluation of the human rights record of its own newly elected council members.

Only through a concerted international effort based on consensus and cooperation will the world community be able to overcome a number of other pressing global challenges. The degradation of our planet's environment is truly a global problem, as is the spread of epidemic disease. Most dangerous of all is the continuing and growing gap between the developing and developed nations. The great divide between North and South, between haves and have-nots is as dangerous as the divide between Eastern and Western blocs ever was during the Cold War. We have to do our utmost to reach the U.N.'s millennium goals of reducing poverty in the developing world.

Brutal and unrelenting poverty is a scourge, unsolved in spite of decades of massive international aid and countless well-meant programs. Clearly, the quality of governance in aid-receiving countries has a crucial role to play, as well as their readiness to foster reforms and progress. But the quality of aid-providing efforts also needs to be improved. We need better international coordination of results-oriented programs, which should be constantly monitored for their effectiveness.

The worldwide spread of terrorism as well as the growing signs of intolerance and xenophobia in many countries underscore the urgent worldwide need for a meaningful and sustained dialogue between civilizations. As already recognized at the Millennium General Assembly of the United Nations, our common goal is to overcome the prejudice, misperceptions and polarization that stand as barriers to better understanding and consensus among members of different races, religions and cultures.

Due to the enormous importance of nuclear nonproliferation, the world's democracies should maintain a coherent position regarding the nuclear program of Iran. We welcome the recent joint initiatives by the United States, the United Nations Security Council and the European Union to offer a constructive solution to the Iranian nuclear issue and hope that the Iranian leadership will respond in kind.

The longstanding conflict in the Middle East remains a major source of world tensions. We fully empathize with the desire of the Jewish people to

live on their ancestral land in security and at peace with their neighbors. We also wish to see a free and prosperous Palestinian state coexist, peacefully, side by side with the State of Israel. For this to be achieved, the Hamas-led Palestinian administration must abide by previously signed international agreements. There is no other way.

Education could play an important role in immunizing our societies against the dangers of extremism and prejudice. Children should not be raised in hatred; societies should have more constructive goals than the endless cultivation of grievances and the stark division of the human race into "us" and "them."

Every society has experienced some dark events in its history, at times as victim, at others as perpetrator or collaborator. We must inform our children of our past mistakes, so that these may never be repeated again. An objective evaluation of the legacy of the past will free us to address the challenges of the future. We in Latvia believe in the importance of research, remembrance, and education, even on the most sensitive issues. This includes the crimes of the Holocaust while Latvia was under Nazi German occupation, as well as the crimes committed in the name of Communism under the Soviet occupation regime.

It is also the duty of each country to preserve its historic, cultural, and religious heritage. Latvia is a country with a multiethnic and multireligious mosaic. We are proud of our ethnic communities and of the contributions that their sons and daughters have made to Latvia's human, economic, and cultural development. As a pluralistic and flourishing democracy, we enjoy freedom of religion and have been gradually renewing the houses of worship of different faiths, including the many desecrated Lutheran churches, desecrated in Communist times. Soon after recovering our independence, we received a visit by Pope John Paul II. Last month, the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Aleksey II, paid a historic visit to my country. Just recently, with the support of the U.S. Government and the family of the late Latvian-born painter Mark Rothko, I attended the reconsecration ceremony of a reconstructed Jewish synagogue in the city of Daugavpils.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, distinguished Members of Congress, fanaticism and extremism remain a scourge of humanity, as they have been for many centuries. Violence and hatred continue to plague many nations and block their road to achieving progress. Greed, opportunism, and brute force oppress many peoples and deny them the most basic of human rights. Yet just as clearly, the world also knows charity, compassion, and the desire for kindness. Human beings everywhere are capable of change, and change for the better.

Again and again in history, we have seen the victory of freedom over tyr-

anny, exploitation and chaos. It may take decades, as it did for Latvia, but we did gain the freedom that is ours by right. We know the value of freedom and feel compassion for those who are still deprived of it. We know the price of freedom, for we have paid for it, and we would be ready to do it again and again.

Every nation on Earth is entitled to freedom. It is a dream that must be kept alive, no matter how long it takes or how hard it is to achieve. We must share the dream that someday there won't be a tyranny left anywhere in the world. We must work for a future where every nation on Earth will have thrown off the shackles of injustice and of oppression, and where every person on Earth will enjoy the same rights and liberties that now are the privilege of the more democratic and the more developed countries. It will take time, it will take effort, but it must happen. And it will happen all the sooner the better we learn to work for it and plan for it, all of us, large and small, together.

[Applause, the Members rising.]

At 11 o'clock and 40 minutes a.m., Her Excellency Dr. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia, accompanied by the committee of escort, retired from the Hall of the House of Representatives.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms escorted the Acting Dean of the Diplomatic Corps from the Chamber.

#### JOINT MEETING DISSOLVED

The SPEAKER. The purpose of the joint meeting having been completed, the Chair declares the joint meeting of the two Houses now dissolved.

Accordingly, at 11 o'clock and 41 minutes a.m., the joint meeting of the two Houses was dissolved.

The Members of the Senate retired to their Chamber.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The House will continue in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 1225

#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BOOZMAN) at 12 o'clock and 25 minutes p.m.

#### PRINTING OF PROCEEDINGS HAD DURING RECESS

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the proceedings had during the recess be printed in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.